

In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West

— Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)



## Does America Need God?

A Scientific Method  
to Find God

08

The God of Abrahamic Faiths Saves us from  
Sin and Crime

11

American Youth Turning Away from Churches

13

Strength in Singularity and America's Self-Destructive  
Homage to Deities

16

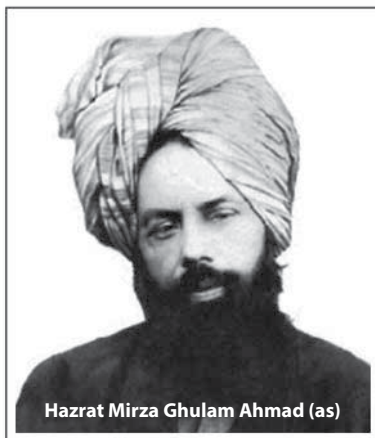
The Growth of Atheism  
in America

19

Atheism and the Morality of Murder

22

# The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA  
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

*United States of America*

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (the Mahdi and Messiah).

The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam: peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God-in its pristine purity.

Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (The Holy Qur'an: 98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qura'nic teaching:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (the Holy Qur'an: 2:257).

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

The Community has been headed by the elected successors of Hazrat Ahmad (as). The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,  
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

[www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org)  
[www.muslimsunrise.com](http://www.muslimsunrise.com)

# The Muslim Sunrise

[www.muslimsunrise.com](http://www.muslimsunrise.com)



@MuslimSunrise



@MuslimSunrise



@Muslim.Sunrise.Official



The Muslim Sunrise

The *Muslim Sunrise* is published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, under the auspices of Dr. Mirza Maghfoor Ahmad, Ameer/National President; 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Phone 301-879-0110, Fax 301-879-0115.

The views and opinions expressed by individual contributors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadi Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921. He founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The *Muslim Sunrise* welcomes letters to the Editor, questions, and submissions.

Email us at [contact@muslimsunrise.com](mailto:contact@muslimsunrise.com) or go online to [www.MuslimSunrise.com](http://www.MuslimSunrise.com)



Library of Congress Call Number: BP195.A5 M8

Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer '*Alaihis-Salam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *Radiyallahu 'Anhu/a* or 'may God be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text in order to facilitate reading, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

## Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)  
as: 'Alaihis-Salam (may peace be upon him)  
ra: Radiyallahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)  
rh: Rahimahullahu Ta'ala (may Allah shower His mercy on him)  
aba: Ayyadahullahu Ta'ala Bi-Nasrihil-'Aziz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'an count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

The Muslim Sunrise is a monthly publication of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc.  
Editorial and Executive Office: 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

Single copies: \$4.00. Subscriptions: \$40.00 per year in USA.

# THE MUSLIM SUNRISE TEAM:



## P A T R O N

Dr. Mirza Maghfoor Ahmad  
The Ameer (National President)  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA

## A D V I S E R

Azhar Haneef  
Missionary Incharge  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA

---

## Management Board:

**Chairman:** Falahud Din Shams; **Secretary:** Syed Sajid Ahmad.

**Members:** Dr. Waseem Sayed, Amjad Mahmood Khan,  
Ehtisham haq Mahmood Kauser, Abdullah Dibba, Rizwan Khan.

---

### Editor-in-Chief

Mubasher Ahmad

### Senior Editor

Dr. Wajeesh Bajwa

### Editors

A. Bushra Salam Bajwa  
Mazher Ahmad  
Shazia Sohail

### Design & Layout

Naveed Ahmad Malik

### Website

Muneeb Ahmad

### Social Media

Khalid Khan

### Religion & Science

Dr. Zia H. Shah

### News, Views & Reviews

Dr. Lutf ur Rehman

### Questions & Answers

Dr. Wajeesh Bajwa

### Accounts

Bashir Malik

---

## In This Issue

In the Words of the Promised Messiah (as) Attributes of God	7
A Scientific Method to Find God <b>Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo</b>	8
The God of Abrahamic Faiths Saves us from Sin and Crime <b>Zia H. Shah</b>	11
American Youth Turning Away from Churches <b>Mohammad Zabih Jehlumi</b>	13
Strength in Singularity and America's Self-Destructive Homage to Deities <b>Rabia Munawar Mir</b>	16
The Growth of Atheism in America <b>Attiya Tulbari Ghani</b>	19
Atheism and the Morality of Murder <b>Rizwan Khan</b>	22
We're not Dealing with a Golden Calf; it's a Whole Herd. <b>Iffat Mirza</b>	23





# FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,  
The Gracious, the Merciful,  
Master of the Day of Judgement.  
Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we  
implore for help.  
Guide us in the right path,  
The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed  
(Thy) blessings, those who have not incurred (Thy)  
displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.

The Holy Qur'an (1: 1-7)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ١  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ٢  
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ٣  
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ٤  
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ٥  
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ٦  
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ٧  
غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ٨

## SAYING OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SA)

Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

"One day, I was riding behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) when he said, 'O boy! I will instruct you in some matters. Be watchful of Allah (commandments of Allah), He will preserve you. Safeguard His Rights, He will be ever with you. If you beg, beg of Him Alone; and if you need assistance, supplicate to Allah Alone for help. And remember that if all the people gather to benefit you, they will not be able to benefit you except that which Allah had foreordained (for you); and if all of them gather to do harm to you, they will not be able to afflict you with anything other than that which Allah had pre-destined against you. The pens had been lifted and the ink had dried up.'"

At-Tirmidhi, Riyad as-Salihin 62



# EDITORIAL

JANUARY 2022

To ask the question “Does America Need God?” may sound bizarre and controversial to most Americans, who not only claim to believe in God but follow the national motto, signed by President Eisenhower, which officially declares “In God We Trust.”

Furthermore, we all know that while facing and saluting the American flag, our Pledge of Allegiance is recited in the words: “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Nevertheless, the vital enigma that remains to be addressed is whether most Americans genuinely trust in God in their daily lives or not. In actuality, do they behave in a manner that confirms that America is one nation under God? Unfortunately, when observed, the answer appears to be in the negative!

In this issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we have tried to convey our concerns about the ever-increasing interest in atheism in America, the disinclination of the American youth toward going to church, and the rapid growth of immorality and crime in our society.

Moreover, we have invited our readers to redress these challenges by not believing in many gods but sincerely believing in One God, the God of Abraham, not only through faith but by making the scientific method an effective tool to enhance our faith in One God.

Please, read and enjoy all the articles, and give us your feedback.

Mubasher Ahmad  
Editor-in-Chief

# IN GOD WE TRUST

# IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH(as)

## Attributes of God

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian  
(may peace be upon him)

It needs no argument that the true and perfect God, to believe in Whom is the duty of every creature, is the Lord of the worlds. His Providence is not confined to a particular people, age, or country. He is the Sustainer of all peoples, of all ages, of all places, and of all countries. Allah the Exalted, He is the fountainhead of all grace. Every physical and spiritual power is bestowed by Him, and the whole universe is sustained by Him, and He is the support of all.

God's grace comprehends all peoples, all countries, and all ages, lest any people should complain that God bestowed His bounties upon others, but not upon them, or that others received a Book from Him for their guidance, but they did not, or that in other ages He manifested Himself through His revelation, inspiration, and miracles, but that He remained hidden in their age. By bestowing His grace upon all He obviated all these objections and out of His vast qualities, He did not deprive any people or any age of His physical or spiritual bounties.



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian,  
The Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi (as)

### Reference:

[Extract taken from Paigham-e-Sulh, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, p. 442]

***God is the light of the heavens and the earth. Every light that is visible on the heights or in the valleys, whether in souls or in bodies, whether personal or impersonal, whether apparent or hidden, whether in the mind or outside it, is a bounty of His grace.***

[Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as): Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Vol 1, pp 191-192, footnote]



# A Scientific Method to Find God

Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo

One often hears atheists conclude that there is no God as He cannot be seen, heard, or felt. At least by the majority anyway. However, the case of atheists arriving at this conclusion contradicts the rationale that someone would need to submit for a research proposal. If you ask any researcher or scientist about the process of seeking funds for their research, you would hear that, to begin with, they have to write a rationale, which is a proposal that includes the literature review; examine the previous research done in the field and ascertain why the current idea is essential, list the methods or techniques, and materials that will be used to conduct the research and finally, explain what benefit or impact it will have on society. Of course, the method quality depends on the funding, facilities, and resources available.

A good researcher should know and understand the importance of unbiased research that can take form in blind studies to help remove any bias. An article in the Public Library of Sciences (PLOS) Biology showed that in the life sciences research, overall, 80-92% of research is carried out knowing the treatment and identity of the subject group or samples, where as only the medical and health sciences field is currently carrying out 20% blind studies. In contrast, psychology and cognitive sciences are staggering behind at a meager 7% blind studies rate (1). Why are blind studies critical? More often than not, the topic of the existence of God is very popular among well-known scientists who have concluded with a lack of crucial research on how He does not exist due to the seemingly prevalent suffering in the world. There are many facets of science, and mathematics is also mentioned to downplay or prove God's non-existence. Sometimes the reason for children suffering from diseases such as brain cancer is often used to show how God, if He exists, is evil or unloving.

The topic of suffering has been discussed by many, but no one discusses the scientific method to find God.



Theists often present rational arguments against atheists, while it may seem that atheists work with the same flow to provide logical arguments. This is because the prejudiced or biased mind often does not allow them to think of any method to find God. Why focus on a method? Methods are a way for us to quantify or qualify a sample, thing, or being. Methods are solutions that can be in the form of an instrument such as a microscope to see small things incapable of being seen by the naked eye. For example, Western blotting, to observe and quantify protein levels, High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), a technique in analytical chemistry used to separate, identify, and quantify each component in a mixture. There are many other methods, such as sonar waves to measure oceans' depths; mathematical equations to calculate the distance between Earth and any object in space etc. The point is that we have managed to limitedly quantify unseen specimens. Now you may wonder: if God is Omnipresent yet unseen, and our limited senses cannot see or reach Him, why can't we



use these methods to find Him? Why can't we improve these methods and make them powerful enough to see or reach God? Why can't we find an equation to prove the existence of God? The simple answer is that these methods and equations are not powerful enough. Will they ever be? We cannot know for sure, as we have a lot to find out about ourselves, our planet, and our galaxy. Did you know that many equations in mathematics remain unsolved to this day? Did you know that only recently have we managed to find another planet beyond ours in space, confirming the possibility of other unobserved planets and perhaps other forms of life beyond Earth? (2).

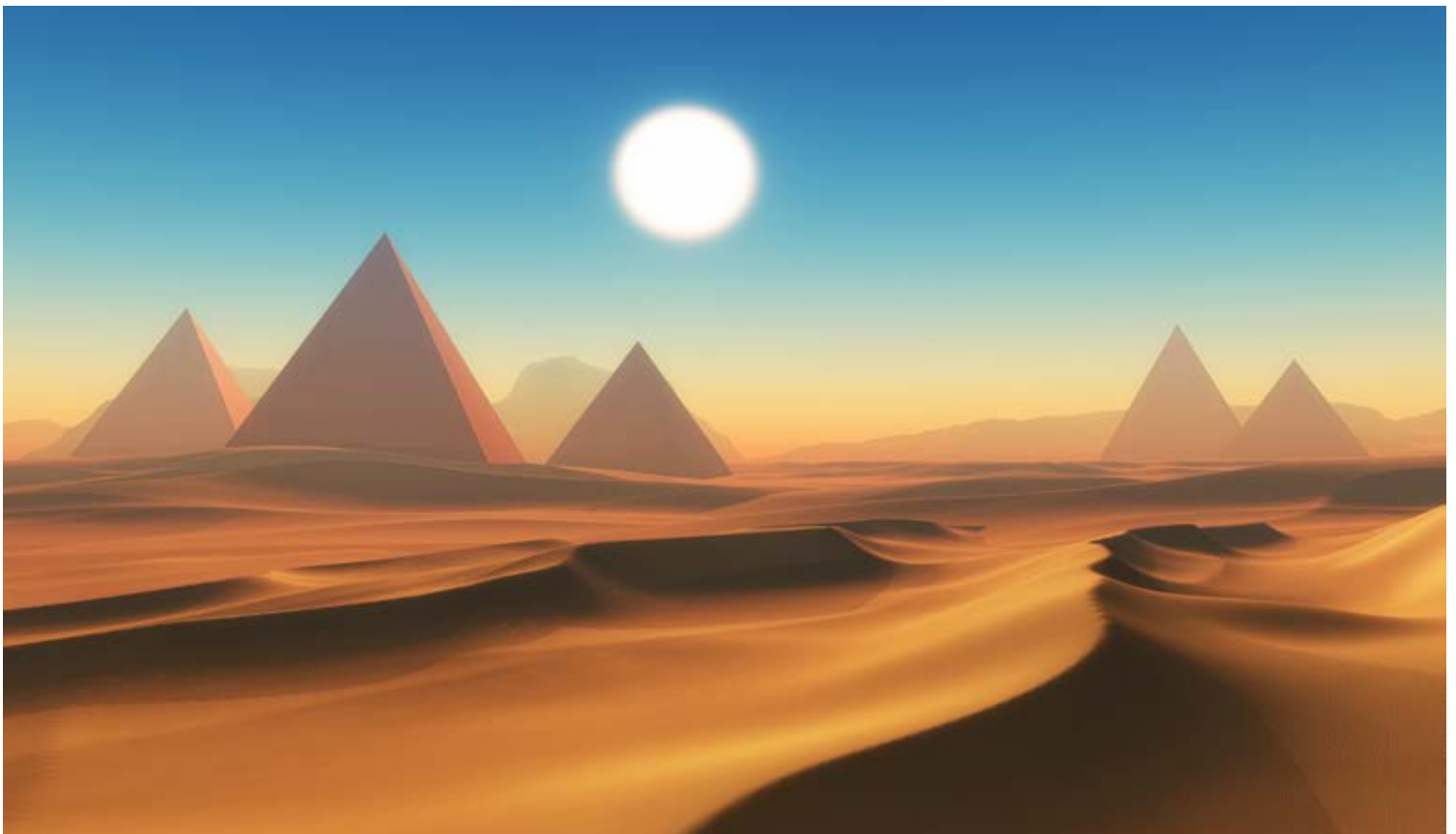
Pharaohs tried to reach God by building Pyramids to show a staircase to heaven, but this effort did not work. God is not a physical being. The world is yet to solve mathematical equations, some as simple as The Collatz Conjecture, which is " $3n+1$ " in which it needs to be proved that all positive integers will end with "1" (3).

We still await to quantify or observe pain. We only feel it at the moment, and sometimes can even quantify the level of pain through the scale of perception. We have yet to find out the exact use for the appendix in the human body. We have yet to discover exactly what

proteins interact to cause diabetic complications and their relation to insulin. We have yet to find out what causes stunted growth in developing fetuses. We have seen signs of life on other planets but have yet to find other forms of life on Earth. Since there are so many undiscovered aspects of our tiny world, it becomes quite unimaginable for a time to come when God will be seen. Perhaps we shall be an extinct species or civilization by then.

Often, religious communities present their Holy textbooks to provide proof of the existence of God. These religious texts, especially the Holy Qur'an, point to an All-Knowing Being whom we call God. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an which mention God's infinite power and His creation, such as, the moving of mountains and the way that planets move in their pre-determined orbits:

"And thou seest the mountains that thou thinkest to be firmly fixed passing away like the passing away of the clouds—the handiwork of Allah Who has made everything perfect. Verily, He knows full well what you do" (4).



"And He it is Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each gliding along smoothly in its orbit" (5).

The Holy Qur'an says that "Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth" (6). We believe Allah is the Creator of all things on this Earth. The whole world of creation obeys His laws. We must perfect scientific methods and push our boundaries of knowledge to observe the signs of Allah and testify that indeed this is not created in vain, as we read in the Qur'an:

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and quickens in addition to that the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth, are indeed Signs for the people who understand" (7).

There is a Hadith, a saying of the Holy Prophet (sa): "The abundance of a meal stems from washing the hands both before and after the meal (8)".

This was stated in a pre-microscope era; how did this come about? The story developed after this in 1850, when a Hungarian doctor, Ignaz Semmelweis, observed a link between maternal ward deaths and the number of doctors coming out of the morgue without washing their hands to tend ward patients (9). This simple link and the act of washing hands eventually reduced the deaths, and the theory then developed further, leading to the germ theory and eventual confirmation of these microorganisms through the microscope.

If we reflect and understand carefully, we may not have the scientific methods to observe or use our physical senses to confirm the link or existence of something. It does not mean that the thing or being in question does not exist. It simply means that we do not yet have the power to observe it. Perhaps belief alone led to the proposal of washing hands, without any backing. Sometimes all that is needed is a determined belief; an

observation, the methods to test it can be developed later, or perhaps never, due to our limited knowledge, facilities, and resources. In the cycle of life, maybe we will meet God in the later stage that comes in the afterlife, but if we are His faithful servants, we can "meet" Him in this life too, and with an unbiased mind, we may even be able to find Him through uttering a word of prayer to "Guide us in the right path" (10), which will help further the cause. We may think God is far away, but He is actually within us; as He Himself tells us in the Holy Qur'an, "We are nearer to him than even his jugular vein" (11).

## References:

1. Evidence of Experimental Bias in the Life Sciences: Why We Need Blind Data Recording. <https://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1002190> (Accessed: November 28, 2021)
2. New planet discovered after it 'photobombs' European Space Agency mission. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/science/new-planet-discovered-after-photobombs-24416115> (Accessed: November 28, 2021)
3. 10 Math Equations That Have Never Been Solved - Interactive Mathematics. <https://www.intmath.com/blog/mathematics/10-math-equations-that-have-never-been-solved-12456> (Accessed: November 28, 2021)
4. The Holy Qur'an (27:89)
5. The Holy Qur'an (21:34)
6. The Holy Qur'an (3:192)
7. The Holy Qur'an (2:165)
8. Tirmidhi, Shamail, 79
9. In 1850, Ignaz Semmelweis saved lives with three words: wash your hands | PBS NewsHour, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/ignaz-semmelweis-doctor-prescribed-hand-washing> (Accessed: November 28, 2021)
10. The Holy Qur'an (1:6)
11. The Holy Qur'an (50:17)

**"We are  
nearer to him  
than even  
his jugular  
vein"**

**The Holy Qur'an (50:17)**

# The God of Abrahamic Faiths Saves us from Sin and Crime

Zia H. Shah

Many of you know of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand for her beautiful stance on interfaith tolerance (1).

But have you met Princess Alice from New Zealand? Probably not, because she is not an actual princess, only an imaginary one.

To meet her, I want you to watch a National Geographic video (2). You can watch the video in the references mentioned here (3, 4).

But, before you meet her, let me share a little bit of background.

Agnostics and atheists argue against accountability and stress that they can also be moral without belief in God. They can certainly be. As every human being has a conscience, and each one of us embellishes it to a variable degree, in that sense, both theists and atheists can be moral.

However, theists have an additional factor driving them to be moral, namely a belief in an All-Seeing God. I do not want to argue this issue at length here. Still, I would only suggest watching 6 minutes of a recent 50-minute documentary by National Geographic starring Morgan Freeman, The Story of God, season 1, episode 5. Starting at minute 32 of this video and focusing on the work of a New Zealand researcher, Jesse Michael Bering, with 6-year-old children to see how a belief in invisible Princess Alice affects their behavior and honesty (3,4).

Jesse Michael Bering (born 6 May 1975) is an American writer and academic. He is an Associate Professor in Science Communication at the University of Otago (where he serves as Director of the Centre for Science Communication) and a frequent contributor to Scientific American, Slate, and Das Magazin (Switzerland). His work has also appeared in New York Magazine, The Guardian, and The New Republic and featured on NPR, the BBC, and elsewhere.

Just as a belief in invisible Princess Alice makes the 6-year-old more honest, genuine faith in an All-Seeing God can improve the believers' actions, character, and morality.

From Princess Alice, let us catapult to the All-Knowing God of the Abrahamic faiths.

In the three great monotheistic religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, God is viewed as a Supreme, transcendent being, beyond matter, space and time. Yet, the foundation of all that meets our senses is described in terms of matter, space, and time. That is the Al-Batin or the Hidden God of monotheism. Furthermore, this God is not the god of Deism, who created the world and then left it alone, or the god of pantheism, who is equated with all of existence. On the contrary, the Islamic and the Judeo-Christian God is a nanosecond-by-nanosecond participant in each event that takes place in every cubic nanometer of the universe. He has full knowledge of all things. God listens to every thought and participates in each action of His very special creation, a minute bit of organized matter called humanity that moves around on the surface of a tiny pebble in a vast universe.

As indicated above, just as a belief in invisible Princess Alice changes the behavior of 6-year-olds, the faith in the Abrahamic God can change our conduct and eventually our lives and inspire us to the most charitable and selfless deeds. But a superficial belief in God will not suffice. It has to be a deeply felt firm faith that affects our behavior and actions. Allah says in the Qur'an, "Only those of His servants who possess knowledge are fully God-conscious. Indeed, Allah is Mighty, Most Forgiving" (5).

So, for genuine faith that is rooted in truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth that is fully capable of affecting our behavior, we need to study and investigate and find the best and the most authentic Abrahamic tradition and follow that. This is indeed a

lifelong mission of overcoming personal biases and societal divisions in pursuit of the truth. But, I will not dwell on the different sects of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam here today.

Human nature is such that merely theoretical ideas do not move our hearts and minds. Therefore, Islam stresses the correctness of ideas and beliefs and emphasizes our deeds and practices and even what the modern world calls rituals. Today, I want to highlight only three activities in Muslim lives by quoting two verses of the Qur'an, and I will conclude with that.

According to Islamic teachings, Salat (five daily ritual prayers), Saum (obligatory and voluntary fasting), and Zikr-e-Ilahi, (meditating on attributes of God constantly), embellish our God-consciousness:

"Recite that which has been revealed to you (Muhammad) of the Book, and observe Salat. Surely, Salat restrains one from indecency and manifest evil, and Zikr-e-Ilahi indeed is the greatest virtue. And Allah knows what you do" (6).

And:

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become God-conscious" (7).

#### References:

1. <http://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/ali-kassay/nobel-prize-noble-woman>
2. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tv/shows/the-story-of-god-with-morgan-freeman>
3. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tv/shows/the-story-of-god-with-morgan-freeman>
4. <https://themuslimtimes.info/2021/08/25/national-geographic-video-all-knowing-all-seeing-god-keeps-us-away-from-crime-and-sin-see-the-evidence-4/>
5. The Holy Qur'an (35:29)
6. The Holy Qur'an (29:46)
7. The Holy Qur'an (2:184)

***He sees without physical eyes, hears without physical ears and speaks without a physical tongue. It is His function to bring into being from nothingness... Foolish is the one who denies His powers and blind is the one who is unaware of their depth. He does everything except that which is inconsistent with His dignity or is opposed to His promise. He is one in His being and His attributes and his actions and His powers. All doors that lead to Him are closed except the one door which has been opened by the Holy Qur'an.***

*[Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as): Al-Wasiyyat, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 20, p. 311]*



# American Youth Turning Away from Churches

Mohammad Zabih Jehlumi

As an Ahmadi Muslim, I do not have firsthand knowledge of why one would disassociate themselves from the church. However, is leaving the church that different from, let's say, leaving the mosque or the synagogue? On the other hand, one could also say that staying with one's faith, whether Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or any organized religion, is likely due to similar faith-based reasons. I am trying to examine how organized religions face identical challenges with retaining their youth, albeit some more than others. Depending on which study you look at or whom you talk to, the answers to this question may vary in complexity. Why young people leave the church, or religion in general, can be broken down into categories and subcategories. Multiple studies identify the main reasons for this phenomenon. Despite all these studies, I think that the answer can be summarized in one word, lifestyle. By no means I am undermining the importance of the studies and the effort spent on this vital subject. However, no matter how you slice the pie, it boils down to lifestyle choices that shape the present and the future for our younger generation. To understand the youth and the drivers behind their decisions, we need to look at some of the data collected.

Before I list some of the reasons that I came across in my research for this article, it is essential to mention here that the issue of youth turning away from religion is not unique to Christianity and that when referring to 'the youth,' I am talking about millennials and younger (people born in 1981 and later) (1). Nevertheless, it is equally important to mention that Christian youth make up more than 50 percent of the U.S. millennial population, so any impact on this population has a significant effect on our nation and society. According to the Religious Landscape Study conducted by the Pew Research Center, the religious composition of younger millennials is 56 percent Christian, 8 percent non-Christian faiths, and 36 percent unaffiliated (all three categories are broken

into subcategories in the study) (2). Depending on which study or article you read, the number of youth leaving the church varies between 60 to 70 percent, which is an alarming number. If this trend continues, it can be assumed that the percentage of people who fall into the unaffiliated category would rise. According to the Pew Research Center, the unaffiliated group comprises atheists, agnostics, and 'nothing in particular' (2).

An article written by Holly Meyer and published by The Tennessean on January 15, 2019 (3), presents a summary of a study done by LifeWay Christian Resources (4) in 2017 in which 2,002 Americans between the ages of 23 and 30 were asked to participate in the survey. The survey provided a list of 55 possible reasons for why they no longer attended the church and asked them to select all reasons that applied to them. According to the study, 66 percent of survey participants said that they stopped attending church regularly. The article compartmentalizes the reasons most selected by the participants into the following four categories:

- Life changes
- Church or pastor related reasons
- Religious, ethical, or political beliefs
- Student and youth ministry reasons

According to the survey, a vast majority, 96 percent, selected life changes as the number one reason why they stopped going to church. These life changes primarily stemmed from moving out of the parental home to attend college or for work/career-related commitments. It is not surprising that these were selected as the number one reason by the survey participants. In the current day and age, it appears that a college education is a must if you want to succeed in life. Going to college and gaining knowledge is noble, commendable, and undoubtedly a privilege; however, it also brings about significant lifestyle changes for many young and impressionable

people. Leaving your parents' house and moving into a dorm means that you may not have the protection and guidance that your parents provided. Students are faced with all that comes along with independent living and are suddenly responsible for making their own decisions. Another critical factor is the duration for which young people are away from their families. Four years of undergraduate studies alone is long enough to change most people, especially those young people who are still trying to find their way in life. Studying takes up most of a student's time. Whatever free time is left is used to do chores and enjoy campus life, which can draw young people away from making time for or interest in the church and religion. Attending church becomes more complex and less of a priority. This aspect of life can impact all of us, regardless of religious beliefs. Many of our children have already attended college, are currently attending, or will be attending soon.

The second most selected reason is, unfortunately, more common than one might expect. Most of the youth said that other church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical and that they did not feel connected with other church members. I have personal experience in this area as I was privileged to serve as a Local and Regional Qaid (leader) for the Men's Youth Auxiliary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. I heard some young boys and men who were part of this auxiliary express similar concerns. They felt that some elders pass judgment about their appearance and their way of life without really knowing them or their circumstances. Additionally, some felt uncomfortable to ask certain questions or discuss specific topics openly. Younger people also find it challenging to connect with the elders and vice versa; this can often be language-related between generations who are raised in different places and cultures. However, by the grace of Allah, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has recognized these issues and trends and is actively taking steps to mitigate them. Various programs specifically address the most current issues, such as LGBTQ, Black Lives Matter, etc. While talking to a Christian co-worker and friend, I asked him if they faced this issue at their church. He stated that this used to be commonplace at their church in the past; however, much like our community, their church leadership recognized the

need to address these issues. A concerted effort was and is being made to establish personal relationships with young members to get to know them better.

As more social, ethical, and political issues become intertwined with religious views, this becomes another matter of contention for many millennials. According to the LifeWay survey, many young people do not agree with the church's political and social issues policy. In addition, according to the Pew Research Center (2), only 23 percent of younger millennials consider religion as a source of guidance on right or wrong. The majority, or 77 percent, rely on philosophy, reason, common sense, or science as their source; many, therefore, do not see eye to eye with the church regarding their social or political views. It is also safe to say that as these young people are trying to find their way through life, they rely less on religion to differentiate right from wrong, thus further minimizing the need to attend church.

Lastly, the fourth category is of youth who cited issues with the students and youth ministry as their reason for leaving the church. This issue may be somewhat unique to Christianity as other organized religions may not have a youth ministry, at least not at every place of worship. In this case, the youth felt that they did not connect with students in the youth ministry, while some thought that the students in the youth ministry were judgmental or hypocritical.



As I mentioned initially, depending on which study, survey, or article you read, you will get an array of reasons why young people are leaving the church and religion in general. One may ask why a Muslim like myself would care about the state of the church and its young members. As Muslims living in America, we are not immune to our surroundings and our society's issues. Furthermore, as Ahmadi Muslims, it is even more critical for us to take a keen interest in this topic. As Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) stated: "Nations cannot be reformed without the reformation of their youth" (5). Firstly, we need to take some time to self-reflect as the reasons mentioned above can and do afflict our youth. Our youth deal with the same challenges of being away from families, the larger community, and of confronting the lust and luster of this world on their own. We also face generational gaps and some judgmental behavior within our mosques. Being able to make all the right decisions at a young and impressionable age is not easy, let alone when most of your peers seem to be relying on everything other than religion as their moral compass. We need to tackle this issue early on and nurture our youth with love and compassion from early childhood. We need to make more effort to get to know every young person in our mosques to help them along their journey. Secondly, our obligation as Ahmadi Muslims is to reach out to and connect with young Americans who are leaving the church. The article "Millennials Are Leaving Religion And Not Coming Back" by Daniel Cox and Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux published on December 12, 2019 (6) mentions a survey by the American Enterprise Institute. The survey was conducted in November of 2019 by more than 2,500 Americans. Summarized below are the three reasons the study identified as to why millennials are not returning to religion:

- Many millennials were not too religious to begin with.
- Increased likelihood of having a non-religious spouse.
- Relationship between morality and religion.

Considering the reasons mentioned above, if we reach out to these young souls early and often, by giving

them the beautiful message of Islam and praying for them, maybe we can reverse these alarming trends and bring them back to religion.

In conclusion, remembering what Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) said, it would be in our interest to help guide and reform the youth of America. Therefore, it is incumbent on every Ahmadi Muslim to pray for all the youth and actively assist them in finding their way through life.

#### References:

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennials> (Accessed November 17, 2021)
2. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/> (Accessed November 17, 2021)
3. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2019/01/15/lifeway-research-survey-says-young-adults-dropping-out-church/2550997002/> (Accessed November 17, 2021)
4. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LifeWay\\_Christian\\_Resources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LifeWay_Christian_Resources) (Accessed November 17, 2021)
5. Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II (ra), Friday Sermon delivered April 1, 1938 – Al-Fazal News Paper, April 10, 1938
6. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/millennials-are-leaving-religion-and-not-coming-back> (Accessed November 30, 2021)

***The truth is that as God Almighty Himself is unbounded, His activities are unbounded also. It is beyond and above human power to reach the reality of every activity of God.***

*[Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as): Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 23, pp. 280-281]*

# Strength in Singularity and America's Self-Destructive Homage to Deities

Rabia Munawar Mir

## Introduction

The United States of America is not crumbling. It is unraveling. As competing interests and conflicting values take hold, arguably the central tenet of this great nation, pluralism of thought (or ideologies), has become its very weakness. Pluralism is a thing of beauty. But without a centrifugal force to sustain its cohesion, it is a dangerous business that eventually results in dispersion and displacement of the whole. Consider that a central planet may hold together, by its gravitational pull, the configuration of multiple planets within its orbit. But if that central planet's gravitational pull were to weaken or disappear, the other planets would shoot off into space - either whirl away forever into oblivion or become subject to the gravitational pull of another, larger planet. A central cohesive force is crucial for the well-being of any system, including that of a nation-state. America is unraveling because it lacks a central cohesive force. American nationalism no longer seems to be doing the trick (if it ever did). America today lacks a singularity that might hold together with grace its vast differences. It lacks an absolute directive at its core. What America is being consumed by is its multitude of gods. A singular God is the need of the hour and is at the crux of a long-term solution.

## Scope

This article will look at current American ideology as it pertains to gender and race politics. First, it will discuss how America's blind acceptance of every vein of thought, with no central tenet against which one can gauge the validity and worth of viewpoints, is resulting in a conflict. This conflict is the competing thoughts that lie within the concept of a nation-state, vying against each other and threatening to pull apart the fabric of the nation-state itself. It will then offer, as a comparison, the Islamic approach and shed light on Islam's capacity to effectively provide a particular directive while providing a flexible framework that accommodates differences, but which, on account of the prevailing singular directive, does not encourage divisiveness and does not desert good sense.

## Gender

America's openness to different ideas and ways of life is admirable. It is key to the country's success. This openness is an excellent source of power, for excessive boundaries stifle growth. On the opposite end of the spectrum, zero limits also wreak havoc. Consider, for example, that currently America is delving into an identity crisis perhaps never before seen in history. A strange kind of social chaos is emerging wherein biological sex has become subject to discussion and interpretation.

Biological sex, once considered immutable, has gone from a fact of life to an interpretive point of contention. People are allowed, even encouraged, to question whether they identify with their biology and if they do not, they are allowed, even encouraged, to alter their biology. This conversation is not limited to hermaphrodites (a condition rarely found in humans in which individuals are born with male and female organs). Instead, the current discussion encompasses all males and females with particular biological sex but does not "identify" with it (1).

Current American social discourse allows for this departure from physical biology to accommodate different ways of life and different modes of thought, catering to the needs of multiple demographics and interest groups, catering to individuals who believe in absolute freedom; to lobbying groups who derive strength from adding transgender rights to their identity politics; catering to those who have anti-religious sentiments and believe progress lies in discarding religious beliefs entirely. It, ironically, also caters to the spiritual elements which oppose such world views. America assures all sides that they are each within their constitutional rights, and America allows everything. And, therefore, America is great. Is there a cost to serving competing interest groups without a central tenet to keep them aligned toward a common goal? When multiple groups are facing different directions, pursuing other goals within a singular framework, and pushing against that

framework for ever-increasing allowances in power, the framework will either do one of two things, it will, like an elastic band, extend and then snap back (hard), or it will simply snap and break. We already see the beginnings of both these scenarios within America.

An overarching socio-political framework, to be practical, must be accommodating. Still, it must also be mindful of the consequences of its accommodation. For example, what are the long-term medical and social implications of the U.S.'s rising number of sex reassignment surgeries? (2). The framework must be accommodating but not so weak as to allow it to suffer for failing to consider the consequences of accommodation. Likewise, it must be strong, but not so rigid as to limit the scope of agency of the individuals who reside within that framework (individuals must be allowed to have different world views, but those views must exist within some moral orbit, rather than enabling chaotic, freewheeling trajectories). That is to say, the overarching framework must be vast and powerful, with clear direction, but it must also be flexible, much in the way that Islam is.

Concerning biological sex, the Islamic view, while straightforward, is also nuanced and pivots to accommodate different people, based on their needs, without foregoing Islamic tenets of modesty and decency. For example, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih V (aba), said regarding transgender rights:

"It can never be morally right for society to encourage young people to change their biological gender or sex. This is completely against the teachings of Islam. Nonetheless, some people are born intersex, and they should be supported and helped by society to live their lives in the best way possible. They should be protected from discrimination or having their human rights usurped" (3).

Thus, Islam maintains an overarching religious framework, but one characterized by the flexibility to adhere to religious injunction while preserving the dignity of all of Allah's creation.

## Race

Race is another point of America's unraveling. Caucasians remain the single most powerful racial

group in America (4). But the national social narrative is shifting against them. There appears to be an increase in anti-white sentiment in America (5). Interestingly, this strange inversion in racial fortune has been heralded on social media as progressive, the beginnings of the shift in privilege. Mainstream media and academia seem to endorse this shift in privilege if not outrightly applauding effectively. And so, previously, whereas America catered to the predominant racial groups' (racist) sentiments, it is now catering to the minority racial groups' (racist) ideas. Once again, the system is catering to different demographics and multiple lobby groups. In America we find multiple groups pursuing different goals within a singular framework and pushing against that framework for ever-increasing allowances in power. The framework will extend and then snap back, or it will simply snap and break. Both will result in social catastrophes.

The overarching race-based framework in America requires a gentle uprooting and re-routing. Rather than redirecting hateful sentiments, what is necessary, per Islamic teachings, is a recognition of our shared humanity. The Holy Qur'an states:

"O mankind, We have made you tribes and sub-tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you" (6).

Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih II (ra) writes in his Commentary of the Holy Qur'an:

"The whole human race is but one family. The division into tribes, nations, and races is meant to give them better knowledge of one another to benefit from one another's national characteristics and good qualities. On the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage at Mecca, the Holy Prophet (sa) said,

'O ye men! Your God is one, and your ancestor is one. An Arab possesses no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab over an Arab. A white is in no way superior to a red, nor, for that matter, a red to a white, but only to the extent to which he discharges his duty to God and man. Therefore, the most honored among you in the sight of God is the most righteous among you'" (6).



Thus, Islam maintains an overarching framework in which all of humanity is united regardless of race. All races are deemed equal before the one true God. It is the beauty of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) that even centuries ago, he knew that any race could become victim to cruelty, and any race could become so arrogant as to wield that cruelty with pride. The singular Islamic directive of homage to the one true God and the fostering of humility generates unity despite racial and cultural differences and national and historical rifts. And so, Islam, rather than shifting the finger of blame to indulge different groups at different times, encourages an approach geared toward unity. For divisiveness is a dangerous business. And Islam does not cater to it. America would, no doubt, benefit from a similar approach.

### Conclusion

Can you feel the changes? They are not subtle, as they once were, spanned across generations. They now occur within the span of a few years. These changes are pronounced and powerful. The horizon has begun to shimmer. The earth has already started to shift. Socio-political tectonic shifts are both revealing and creating fault lines. Technological advancements are occurring at a phenomenal pace, and our legal and socio-political infrastructures are failing to keep up. Ideas are flitting back and forth between continents at

the speed of light, with little grace given to assessing their value, as our moral compasses become bogged down in a quagmire of moral ambiguities. The social narratives on which hinge our individual and communal identities, and our very sanity, are daily receiving new rounds of beatings, being forcefully molded into new shapes, their innards constantly reconfigured until they are tangled and treacherous.

So then, what can you rely on? Who can you trust? Can you even trust your judgment when you are subject to the chaotically changing elements? This is the question that is hounding America today. In need of a singular, centrifugal, cohesive force that offers both gravitational pull and the capacity to provide each its right to its orbit, America needs a singular God that is both a single point of direction on the horizon and as vast and accommodating as the horizon itself.

### References:

1. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Canada. "Hermaphroditism." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/science> (Accessed: November 20, 2021)
2. "Transgender Identities." Planned Parenthood, 2021. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/transgender> (Accessed: November 20, 2021)
3. "Lajna Imaillah Holland Have Honour of Two Virtual Meetings with World Head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community." Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Press & Media Office, 2020. <https://www.alislam.org/press-release/lajna-imaillah-holland-have-honour-of-two-virtual-meetings-with-world-head-of-ahmadiyya-muslim-community/> (Accessed: November 20, 2021)
4. Lu, Denise; Jon Huan; Ashwin Seshagiri; Haeyoun Park and Troy Griggs, "Faces of Power: 80% Are White, Even as U.S. Becomes More Diverse." The New York Times. September 9, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/09/us/powerful-people-race-us.html> (Accessed: November 20, 2021)
5. Hockstein, Evelyn. "U.S. mother accuses school board of teaching her daughter she was born evil because she is white." Reuters. November 1, 2021. <https://www.rt.com/usa/539042-loudoun-county-school-mother-white-evil/> (Accessed: November 20, 2021)
6. Holy Qur'an (49:14), Commentary: <https://www.alislam.org/quran/app/49:11> (Accessed: November 20, 2021)

# The Growth of Atheism in America

Attiya Tulbari Ghani



“The definition of ‘atheist’ is a person who does not believe in the existence of a God or many gods” (1). Generally, atheism is a denial of a God or the gods. However, if religion is defined based on belief in spiritual beings, atheism rejects all religious beliefs. And the vast majority of atheists in the United States (U.S.) fit this description, most saying they do not believe in God or a spiritual force of any kind.

Analyzing history, deep into the 20th Century, more than nine in ten Americans said they believed in God and belonged to organized religion. Moreover, the great majority of them called themselves Christian. But in the early 1990s, religious non-affiliation in the U.S. started to rise (2). By the early 2000s, the share of Americans who said they did not associate with any established religion had doubled. Moreover, by the 2010s, the count of atheists, agnostics, and spiritual dabblers had tripled in size (3).

According to a study conducted in 2014, atheists are primarily men and are relatively young in the U.S. The median age for atheists is 34 years, compared with 46 years for all U.S. adults (4). Atheists also are more likely to be wealthy and highly educated (5).

Almost all U.S. atheists say religion is not too, or not at all, important in their lives and that they seldom or never pray (6).

Many atheists also believe that mosques, churches,

and other religious organizations do more harm than good in society. They do not believe in spiritual teachings, but they are well informed about religion (7). In the Pew Research Center’s 2019 religious knowledge survey, atheists were among the best-performing groups, answering all of the fact-based questions correctly as compared to others (8).

As firm believers in God, Ahmadi Muslims do find the growth in the number of atheists troubling. We also realize that true and long-lasting internal harmony can only be established by restoring the connection with our Creator. Our love for others naturally demands that we wish for everyone to experience this inner peace. There is nothing wrong with caring for others enough to desire good for them. And if we believe we have even a morsel of truth that can help others, it should be our desire to share that truth with others.

A discussion about God’s existence should start with acknowledging that the burden of proof lies with the theists, that is, those who believe in God. Some questions are puzzling to most people who are given to reflection and to pondering about life: How did the laws of nature come to be? How did the universe come into existence? And how did life as a phenomenon originate from non-life?

These questions have been answered by God in the Holy Qur’an, which states: “Do not the disbelievers see that the skies and the earth were a closed-up mass, and then We opened them out? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (9).

The verse clearly explains the origin of the universe and that God has created every living thing from water, which, today, is proven to be accurate, as the human body consists of 75% water, a universally-known fact.

As Ahmadi Muslims, we have accepted the beautiful teachings of Prophet Muhammad (sa) and recognize Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as) who was prophesied to reform humankind in the Latter Days. His stated mission was and is to bring all people back to the path of God, including atheists and those already professing belief in God. So, as Muslims who believe in the Messiah (as), we need to be especially mindful in fulfilling the responsibility, with wisdom and foresight. As stated in the Holy Qur'an: "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in the best way. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His way; and He knows those who are rightly guided" (10).

We need to make efforts to counteract the growth of atheism in the manner taught to us by God the Almighty. Firstly, He directs us to carry out the duty using wisdom (hikmah). What is this wisdom? It has wide-ranging meanings, varying from being generally aware to keeping the facts in view. 'Hikmah' (wisdom) also denotes a 'resolute and firm word' and a 'conclusive argument, not requiring further proof to establish its validity' (11). Hikmah (wisdom) implies that we need to acquire specific knowledge to call people toward God. If we increase our own knowledge first, we can hold intellectual discussions with someone who does not have faith in God. These discussions will take place according to the recipient's level of understanding. We should know how and where to research to acquire straightforward and reasonable responses so that arguments may be provided to the deniers of the existence of God, according to their mentality, outlook, and viewpoints.

The word, 'hikmah' (wisdom), also denotes 'fairness, forbearance, clemency, prophethood, and refrain from ignorance' (11). Therefore, during debates, one should not present arguments that might be used against other prophets too. Discussing and presenting ideas from this point of view means that we should undertake outreach by application of arguments and teachings from the Holy Qur'an that we ourselves comprehend with complete confidence.

Refraining from ignorance means that we speak in a manner that is easy for others to understand and

dispels their ignorance about the existence of God. The Holy Prophet (sa) said to speak to people according to their level of understanding. Continuity and consistency are also essential in our plan of action. It should not be that we meet our atheist friend once or twice in the year or distribute literature to him randomly, then think that we have done justice to conveying the message. It is crucial to continue to spread the message diligently with wisdom, strong arguments and sound counsel and above all, with perseverance. Perseverance and tolerance require that we respect and care for people irrespective of their beliefs, cultivate higher levels of love and peace within ourselves, in order that we may connect with others effortlessly.

Additionally, the Holy Qur'an directs us to call people toward God in the best manner. The Arabic word for "best" (husn) means a manner that is sound, beautiful, appealing, or pleasing (11). This term is used elsewhere in the Qur'an where it says to speak to others kindly. The Qur'an guides us to communicate with rationality and in the best, kindest possible manner.



His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) has led a worldwide campaign to convey the peaceful message of Islam

It is wise to keep this distinction in mind and not to show docility or cowardice whereby we completely lose our sense of integrity and honor simply because we feel some unseen pressure to have to convey the message to others. Although we are not to fight and create disorder, at times it may be necessary only to refute and counter what is being said, in no way should we ever speak rudely, insult the other, or create a further reason for argument by letting anger cloud our senses. In any case, it is necessary to adopt a soft tone and to demonstrate good morals, while simultaneously

understanding that it is also essential to speak up against what may be wrong or may be a misconception. It should also be remembered that atheists, generally speaking, do not show any pliancy or cowardice in expressing their beliefs. On the contrary, they openly deny the existence of God and the life hereafter. This also puts a heavy responsibility on how strong the faith of Ahmadi Muslims, those who believe in the final and everlasting religion, Islam, should be. The growth in atheism may be viewed as advantageous in some ways because this opposition will open up promising new avenues for outreach. The Promised Messiah (as) states: "The stronger the force of falsehood is which opposes the truth, the power and strength of the truth becomes equally greater" (11).

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as), further states: "It is also commonly said among the landowners/farmers that the more intense the summer heat, the stronger the monsoon. This is a natural phenomenon; the stronger the opposition of the truth, the more it shines and reflects its splendor" (11).

Therefore, the aim is to become a model of true Islam oneself and then to preach the message of Islam and spread its excellence throughout the world. To affect and influence an atheist, one needs to bring about a pure change within oneself. When one becomes a true model of a Muslim, then there is no question of people's attention not being drawn toward us.

Finally, our task is only to convey the message and then to leave matters in God's Hands. Without this trust in God, how can we claim to be God-following people with genuine concern for others? This is the point where wisdom and outreach must be connected through prayer in order to bring about the most significant changes in the hearts of others. We should pray that God touches the hearts of believers and non-believers, guides us all, and grants everyone wisdom and greater levels of understanding. This way, we can collectively recognize one another as the creation of one loving God, our Creator.

## References:

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/12/06/10-facts-about-atheists> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
2. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/atheism-fastest-growing-religion-us/598843> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
3. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/atheism-fastest-growing-religion-us/598843> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
4. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/atheism-fastest-growing-religion-us/598843> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
5. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/atheism-fastest-growing-religion-us/598843> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
6. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-family/atheist/#frequency-of-prayer> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
7. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/21/among-religious-nones-atheists-and-agnostics-know-the-most-about-religion> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
8. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/23/which-religious-groups-know-what-about-religion> (Accessed November 25, 2021)
9. The Holy Qur'an (21:31)
10. The Holy Qur'an (16:26)
11. <https://www.alislam.org/friday-sermon/2017-09-08.html> (Accessed November 25, 2021)

# Atheism and the Morality of Murder

Rizwan Khan

Atheists often claim that they not only refuse but condemn beliefs without scientific backing and confirmation. But in their criticisms of what they call “blind belief,” they stand on thin ice when they hold their own inescapably “blind beliefs,” often without even realizing it.

Take the example of murder. Atheists do not need an archaic, ancient text to tell them murder is wrong; they can figure out something this obvious for themselves.

Let’s apply this practically.

When do you believe the concept of murder started applying to us as a species? Did it apply when we were still like monkeys? Tribes of chimpanzees go to war with one another in the wild. They brutally kill members of other tribes and mutilate their bodies. Sometimes the ones they kill are individuals they were very familiar with and even grew up with (1). Is it morally wrong for animals to behave in this way? Would it have been morally wrong for our ancestors to behave in this way? What about Neanderthals? Would the concept of murder have applied to them? What scientific evidence do you have that a point exists in our evolution where life became special?

Maybe you believe the concept of murder came into existence when we began large game hunting, and altruism became more important to us. However, other primates also show altruism, empathy, awareness of social rules, deception, etc. Maybe you believe the concept of murder came into existence at the stage where we began showing signs of behavioral modernity. However, abstract art and complex tools were also found in Neanderthals, who at times buried their dead. What empirical evidence do you have to prove that a point in our evolution exists when killing within our species was henceforth murder?

If the concept of murder has a basis in reality and is not

a blind belief you hold, then you should have some falsifiable evidence for its existence. After all, that is the claim that atheists gave to believers for their view that the universe had a Conscious Cause. The reality is that without believing in God as a moral point of reference for what is good and evil, your subjective opinion can never be more than an opinion; it is based on a blind belief you hold that human life is special.

It is a blind belief that you apply in daily life so arbitrarily that you don’t know why you eat some forms of life and refuse to eat others. The moral outrage with which you view the eating of some animals is an expression of your conviction in that blind belief.

Maybe you are outraged by the killing and eating of dogs, but you have no problem eating pigs and cows. Perhaps you are more civilized and choose to be a vegetarian or a vegan. It would help if you had a scientific basis for a belief that you hold so firmly, you consider it immoral to kill animals. Is it consciousness that makes you believe animal life is extraordinary? What falsifiable evidence do you have for your belief that the cognition found in plants is not enough to make their life memorable? All you have done is to extend your blind faith in some forms of life being unique to another random category of living creatures. Your concept of murder is not based on science; your beliefs on this subject are found on blind faith; there is no way around it.

Islam teaches a consistent and logical principle: the concept of the sanctity of life originates not in the physical sciences but the spiritual sciences; it originates from God, the cause of all causes. Without a moral point of reference, there is no objective right or wrong; there is only what we want to call good and what we label as evil. To try and claim any other authority for it is, by definition, blind belief.

The Holy Qur’an teaches, ‘And that you kill not the life



which Allah has made sacred, save by right. That is what He has enjoined upon you, that you may understand' (2 ).

An atheist may think they do not need God to tell them murder is wrong, but their attempts to provide evidence of any factual basis for this belief end only in empty justifications and blind faith.

I don't mind atheists denying the validity of blind belief, as long as they are consistent about it. But how do they manage this while passionately holding a set of blind ideas themselves?

## References:

1. Rami Tzabar, "Do chimpanzee wars prove that violence is innate?," BBC, <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150811-do-animals-fight-wars> (Accessed November 30, 2021)
2. The Holy Qur'an (6:152)

## We're not dealing with a golden calf—it's a whole herd

Iffat Mirza

The head of state is, in many ways, the one to whom desperate and hopeful citizens turn. Having made promises of plentiful bread, stable roofs, and general contentment in life, the head of the state, particularly in a free democracy, such as that of the United States (U.S.), is only in that position of power due to such assurances and promises. It is only fair that the general public turns toward them in times of need. Sometimes, the promises are so beautiful and full of hope that the material reality becomes irrelevant. At times it seems that even if there is no bread, the roofs are leaking, and even if a spiral of discontent is settling in, one should not complain; he who made the promise is working tirelessly to fulfill it, and the citizens of the nation should be grateful that they have a figurehead to look over the wants and needs of each individual. Sometimes, as an individual, you feel that the promise has not been fulfilled because you are not adhering to the norms and conventions that the state requires of you. The head of state remains, as ever, untarnished. The dangers of this are self-evident. Any leadership which considers itself above accountability acquires free rein to do as it wishes.

Of course, a 100% approval rate is impossible to achieve, even for the most benevolent and selfless politicians. Errors and oversights will be made by even the most well-intentioned human beings. But it is the constant need to defend the indefensible that should raise alarm bells in any forward-thinking democracy. The politics of personality cults are reigning supreme in many modern nation-states, with the U.S. entirely in tow.

Coming up to a year now since the infamous storming of the U.S. Capitol building on January 6, 2021, it is long overdue to ask the question 'Who is worthy of worship?' The treatment of political figures, including, though not limited to, former President Trump, shows an immense confusion as to what the role of a politician is versus what the role of a deity is. The actions of the rioters in January 2021 were as passionate as a believer wishing to defend his God. Acting as Crusaders and spurred on by their idol, the perpetrators considered no implication nor consequence and resorted to force and violence to reinstate who they believed to be the 'chosen one.'

Whether considering Trump to be a legendary figure like King Arthur of Camelot, to some, a Messianic figure like Jesus (as) himself, or one step further and an absolute deity, the occasion was ultimately a colossal display of idolization of man by man. It rested on the idea that this man alone is he who will save this nation from ultimate ruin.

The irony barely slipped anyone's notice, of the idolization of President Trump by the Christian right, who although professing to act in God's name, quite literally re-enacted the moment in Abrahamic scripture where Moses descends from Mount Sinai after a period of secluded prayer, to see that the Israelites have created a golden calf to worship.

At the 2021 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), a golden statue of Trump was unveiled, and it seemed that the entire conference was held in his honor.

It is easy to consider this a strange and elaborate display of the former President's hubris and the cultish behavior of his followers. Seeing the forest for the trees, however, it appears that this is not a singular event. The wheels had been set in motion, so to speak, for many years, and in fact, these are wheels that know no pause. The very slogan 'Make America Great Again,' implying a past of greatness and honor, is already reminiscent of the sort of language which dominates the religious discourse, particularly that of Christianity. It simultaneously slanders the present as something not only less than great but something in dire need of salvation from the current status quo. It suggests that the incumbent leadership has driven the country to ruin and that one figure, the chosen one, is the one to recognize the cancer of society, diagnose it, and perform the surgery to remove it. There is also just enough hope in the words, America will be great again; we need the right guy to make it so. Unlike the Biblical accounts of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem, God promised the land.

Such rhetoric and allusion to a great past are not exclusive to the Trump presidency. We saw and heard of similar hopes for a 'return to normalcy' with President Biden; again, political discourse was dominated by the idea that only a Democratic leader could save America from the chaos and confusion of

the Trump administration. Such polarization is a necessary tactic to rely on, particularly in a two-party system, which the U.S. has become, whether intentionally or coincidentally. A narrative of Us versus Them is what gets votes, and, with that, it is necessary to portray 'Us' as the savior, regardless of who 'Us' is.

Again, it is worth mentioning that this is not new at all. After the assassination of John F Kennedy (JFK), his widow, Jackie Kennedy, stated, "There'll be great Presidents again [...], but there will never be another Camelot again" (1). The placing of JFK in the shoes of King Arthur - also a Messianic figure for whom some in England still wait - to be her savior in her darkest hour, again leads us back to the issue that politics is very much built on the idolization and deification of political figures.

Such politics imply that inevitably the idolized figure can avoid any accountability. Religious scripture and discourse place God outside the human realm, His will is accepted without question because it is widely understood that He knows what we do not. This rationale makes sense for believers, for it justifies their belief in God as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. The danger arises when we allow politicians the same trust that God is granted, despite not being omnipotent, omniscient, or omnibenevolent. Their job description does not concede to them as deities; instead, they are, primarily and ultimately, civil servants. In forgetting that they are the ones who serve, they allow their 'chosen one' ideals to motivate their agendas which rarely put the country's good first.

This is not exclusive to any one politician or any one political system. The deification of political figures is as ancient as time itself. From the Pharaoh's pyramids to a dictator's monuments, the desire to be revered even beyond death is deeply rooted in a God-complex which seeks to cement the belief that this individual alone is the one who brought peace and prosperity to the nation, despite all external intentions to destroy the culture and norms of the country. After all, if God is eternal, the deified politician must also seek eternal glory if they cannot achieve physical immortality.

The reality, however, is that greatness cannot be achieved in a nation or a society if the leadership does not actively practice humility and grace. If we contrast

the state of leadership today with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, we will learn that we have already been warned of such damaging leadership. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an: "And indeed some men from among the common folk used to seek the protection of some men from among the Jinn, and they thus increased the latter in their pride" (2). Here we learn of the way misguided leaders use the protection of other misguided people to cement and uphold their authority. Thus, we see it is only through such idolization that corruption is fostered.

Let's compare this to an example of genuine humility. It is most pertinent to look toward the model of Hazrat Umar (ra), the second Caliph of the Holy Prophet (sa), who would himself be dressed in torn robes if it meant that the people under his jurisdiction were clothed and fed well. Introducing a range of 'welfare' reforms, to use today's language, his compassion and fear of God guided him toward good leadership. He was ultimately mindful that he was the caliph of a people, and that God would question him one day over any tearful eyes or hungry stomachs. The question of humility was so deeply ingrained in his way of life that it is narrated that once, someone saw Hazrat Umar (ra) carrying a water-skin and asked him why he was carrying it himself? Hazrat Umar (ra) responded that some people had come to see him and had shown the utmost obedience to him. This led him to feel important, and

to rid himself of this feeling and humble himself; he decided to carry the water-skin on his own. Thus, we see incredible self-awareness which he understood to be directly impactful not only to his spirituality but also for the long-term good of his people. Instead of indulging in it as he could have, he sought to remedy even the slightest creeping of self-importance.

Ultimately, the idolization of political figures is perfectly comparable to the scriptural account of the Israelites creating the golden calf; during the time that Moses (as) secluded himself for prayer and communion with God, they looked for guidance elsewhere. They built an inanimate object upon which to rest their hopes, even if it did go against their religious teachings prohibiting blasphemy, the very first of the Ten Commandments. Today, nations are equally lost, and they build their hopes and aspirations of an all-powerful being who will be the force for good, around one figure, or a select few. We are left with not only a golden calf but also a whole herd of fallible idols. To reconsider the question of accountability, it is very easy for leaders in today's world to consider themselves above it. But it would be wise to consider oneself not only accountable to the people they serve, but more importantly to God, whose justice will be enacted, regardless of whether legal justice will be.

## References:

1. White, Theodore, Life Magazine, 6th December 1963, p159.
2. Holy Qur'an (72:7), English Translation by Maulvi Sher Ali

***The God of Islam is the same God Who is visible in the mirror of the law of nature and is discernable in the book of nature. Islam has not presented a new God but has presented the same God Who is presented by the light of man's heart, by the conscience of man, and by heaven and earth.***

*[Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as):  
Majmu'a Ishtiharat, Vol. II, pp. 310-311]*

# poetry

## CORNER

### Feelings of a true lover

*A poem by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi*

---

*Mention not any king to me,  
For I have placed my hopes at another threshold.*

*The Lord God, Who has granted life to the universe,  
He is the Originator, the Creator, the Sustainer.*

*The Generous, All-Powerful, Reliever of problems,  
The Merciful, the Compassionate, Who fulfills all needs.*

*I lie prostrate at His door because it is said  
'In this world, one thing leads to another.'*

*Whenever I remember that Faithful Friend,  
I forget all my friends and relatives.*

*How can I tie my heart to someone other than Him;  
For I am so restless without Him!*

*Search not for my heart in my wounded bosom;  
For I have pinned it to the apron strings of the Beloved.*

*My heart is the Throne of the Beloved;  
My head is an offering in the way of the Friend.*

*How can I describe the extent of His bounties on me;  
For His grace is boundless!*

*How can I ever be able to count His favors;  
For His favors are uncountable!*

*The kind of relationship I have with the Beloved,  
Is beyond the comprehension of all.*

*I cry at His door,  
As a woman cries in the pangs of childbirth.*

*All my time is saturated with His love;  
How happy is the time! How blissful the days!*

*O the garden of my Beloved! I sing Your praises;  
For You have freed me from the beauty of gardens and the joy of spring.*

*(Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Hujjat-Ullah,  
Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.12, p. 149)*

---

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## PressGazette

### THE FUTURE OF MEDIA

**Report: 60% of UK online news articles about Muslims are negative**

**By Charlotte Tobitt**  
**November 30, 2021**

The editors of The Sunday Times and Daily Mirror have backed a report that found almost 60% of online news articles made negative associations with Muslims and Islam and called for “fairer” reporting.

The top three news providers most likely to publish negative articles about Muslims were the agencies AFP, Reuters and Associated Press, the report claimed. It argued they “set the framing of Muslims and Islam” in news reporting.

It called on news wires to “take particular care” in the terms they use given they are often copied wholesale by other media, as well as in their “reliance on singular witness reports especially related to terrorism given how unreliable they have been proven to be in many cases”.

The research from the Muslim Council of Britain’s Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) also found that 47% of TV clips associated Muslims or Islam with negative traits or behavior.

The CfMM was founded by Miqdaad Versi, who routinely monitors press coverage of Muslims and Islam and makes complaints where he feels they are appropriate to the UK press regulators.



A Reuters spokesperson told Press Gazette: “Reuters is committed to reporting on the world in a fair, independent and balanced way, consistent with our trust principles.

“We are also committed to building a diverse newsroom that reflects the world we report on, and ensuring our journalism accurately represents diverse perspectives. We welcome this report and will review its findings.”

The new report follows analysis of almost 48,000 online news articles and more than 5,500 TV clips following daily monitoring of coverage mentioning Muslims and Islam, whether in a passing manner or as the main focus of a story.

Some 34 mainstream news and current affairs websites and 38 TV channels, including all regional channels, were monitored between October 2018 and September 2019. A broader sweep of coverage was also examined in 2019/2020, taking in some of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report accused publications on the right politically of “increasingly regurgitating far-right tropes” and claimed commentators on the right “continuously rail against Muslims as an existential threat to Britain and the wider world”.



Report author Faisal Hanif, a former Times reporter, said he hoped it would spur journalists on to engage in “fairer and more responsible reporting”. He said “many journalists are willing to work with us in good faith. Yet there is a small minority with powerful voices in the media and elsewhere, who will seek to misrepresent our intentions by insinuating that we wish to censor and limit criticism of Islam and Muslims... At the end of the day, all we ask for is fairness, not favors.”

Sunday Times editor Emma Tucker said she welcomed the report “in the full knowledge that it contains criticisms of the press, my own paper included.

“Some of those criticisms are valid. Some I would respectfully disagree with. All, though, are useful,” she said, as to serve her newspaper’s “broad readership we want to hear views from every part of it”. Tucker added: “Despite our best efforts, we won’t always get it right; and of course, sometimes we will just see the issues differently.”

Mirror editor-in-chief Alison Phillips said the report “shows how much we as journalists must question ourselves and the work, we are producing in relation to reporting of Muslims and Islam”.

“Challenging consensus through robust opinion and reporting are an essential part of journalism,” she said.

“Chasing clicks by being deliberately antagonistic and provocative does our profession a disservice. It is possible to craft an argument without resorting to lazy stereotypes or exploiting ungrounded fears about a particular community.

“A sensitivity toward others does not diminish your journalistic skills or somehow undermine the sacred idea of objectivity – it can only enhance the quality of your work.”

Phillips added that although journalists should not act as “standard bearers” for any particular group, faith or interest, they should report “without misrepresentation and generalization and with accuracy and fairness”.

The report also shared some examples of best practice.

It pointed to BBC China correspondent John Sudworth’s 2018 report on China’s hidden camps for Uighur Muslims, The Sun’s featuring of Asma Shuweikh as a “hero of the week”, the Daily Telegraph featuring Muslim women supporting the NHS on its front page, and Stephen Daisley’s analysis in The Spectator of parent protests outside a Birmingham school – despite the magazine being “mostly antagonistic” toward Muslims.

Ahead of the publication of this report, Spectator columnist Charles Moore deemed CfMM an “unrepresentative attempt to decide what we are allowed to read about Islam and its followers”.

The online publication with the highest proportion (37%) of articles deemed s “antagonistic” toward Muslims according to the report’s methodology was The Spectator. The New Statesman had the highest proportion (16%) of “supportive” articles.

Overall, a fifth (21%) of all the articles assessed were categorized as antagonistic compared to 3% deemed supportive. Meanwhile 14% of the articles were classed as being biased.

Online publications with the highest proportion of stories rated “very biased” (meaning at least four of these five factors: association with negative behavior, misrepresentation, generalizations, lack of due prominence of a Muslim voice, and misleading or irrelevant imagery or headlines) were Christian Today (11%), The Spectator (11%), and Daily Mail Australia (10%).

The report found that almost one in ten articles misrepresented Muslims and/or Islam, with 82% of these in news (compared to opinion or features). It said one in four Spectator articles mentioning the subject contained misrepresentation, followed by Daily Mail Australia and Christian Today with at least one in five articles each.

It said Daily Mail Australia had the highest percentage of irrelevant or misleading headlines

(14%), followed by The Sun (6%).

Some 7% per cent of all articles analyzed included one or more generalizations about Muslims and/or Islam while 10% of opinion articles did so.

In broadcast news, the report noted: "Right-wing pundits were frequently left unchallenged when making generalizations against Muslims including falsehoods." It gave several examples from Sky News of tropes such as Muslims allegedly getting special treatment from the media or from airport and government authorities going unchallenged by guests.

The report shared a number of recommendations to improve reporting. They include:

**Avoid linking** ordinary Muslim belief to crime, terrorism or extremism, unless there is a specific justifiable reason to do so.

**Provide a platform** to a broader range of Muslim perspectives, and avoid unrepresentative Muslim voices.

**Increase representation** of Muslims within editorial roles.

**Offer training** and encourage reporters to be aware of any potential biases.

**Publish corrections** with equal weight to the original report.

**Take extreme care** with terminology, especially the word "Islamism"

**Cross-reference religious terminology** with authentic Muslim and Islamic sources to ensure they are being used accurately.

**Avoid referencing** to Muslims or Islam unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.

**Assess and reflect** on overall coverage in terms of its negativity toward Muslims.

**Train journalists** and editors to be aware of racist tropes and conspiracy theories.

**Avoid using generic images** of Muslims when they risk reinforcing stereotypes.

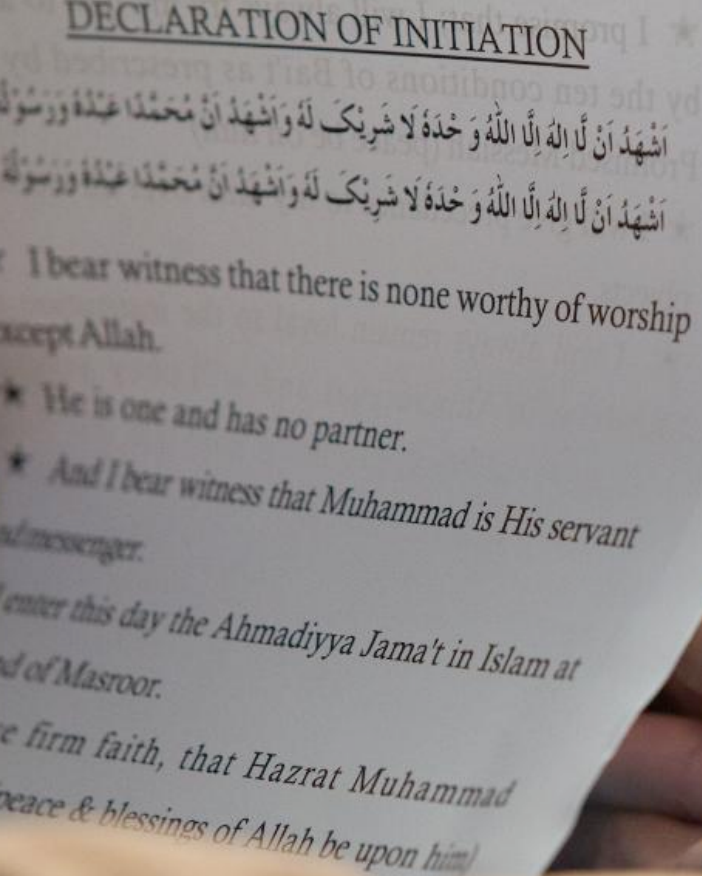


## Questions & Answers

### Q: What is the Oneness of God?

A: The Unity of God is a light that illumines the heart only after the negation of all deities, whether they belong to the inner world or the outer world. It permeates every particle of man's being. How can this be acquired without the aid of God and His Messenger? The duty of man is only to bring death upon his ego and turn his back to devilish pride. He should not boast of his having been reared in the cradle of knowledge but should consider himself as if he were merely an ignorant person and occupy himself in supplications. Then the light of Unity will descend upon him from God and will bestow new life upon him.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), Izalah Auham, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 3, pp. 376-377



# 10 Conditions of *Bai'at*

**On December 1st, 1888, the Promised Messiah (as) published an announcement that God had ordained him that whomsoever sought true faith and piety, should pledge allegiance to him so that Allah may shower His mercy and beneficence on them.**

- 1** That till the last day of his life, he shall abstain from *shirk* (associating any partners with Allah).
- 2** That he shall keep away from falsehood, cruelty, adultery, dishonesty, disorder, rebellion and every kind of evil.
- 3** That he shall offer prayers (*Salat*) five times daily.
- 4** That he shall not inflict injury on any of *Allah's* creatures.
- 5** That he would bear every hardship for the sake of *Allah*.
- 6** That he shall not follow vulgar customs and guard against evil inclinations.
- 7** That he shall discard pride and haughtiness, live in humility & meekness
- 8** That he shall hold his faith, dignity, and the welfare of Islam dearer than his own life, wealth and children.
- 9** That he shall have sympathy for all of God's creatures, and devote his talents to their welfare.
- 10** That he shall establish brotherhood with him (i.e., Ahmad), obeying him in all good things, and firmly adhere to these rules until the last breath of his life.

# SUBSCRIBE NOW



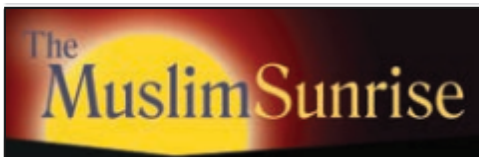
Twelve Issues of the Muslim Sunrise  
for just \$40 per year

[www.muslimsunrise.com](http://www.muslimsunrise.com)

# LOVE FOR ALL HATRED FOR NONE

**Price: \$4.00**

**For Information on Islam: [www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org)**



The Muslim Sunrise is published by the  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA.  
15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring MD 20905

**NON PROFIT ORG**  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
CHAUNCEY, OH  
PERMIT NO. 1

This magazine is not to be reproduced without the written permission from the Editor-in-Chief of the Muslim Sunrise